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## The Madness, Sadness and Gladness of Christmas

IT IS a commonplace so trite as to make its repetition risky that Easter has become the feast of the milliners; Thanksgiving the red-letter day of the gormands; and Christmas the jubilee of the merchants.

No better proof of this is needed than the now frequent saying, "We had better skip Christmas this year," by which is meant avoidance of the shopping madness, the purchasing fever, from which all have suffered in other years.

Our gifts are often amiable cynicisms, wrung out by custom, tributes paid to an "annual holdup" dimly supposed to be entangled somewhere with good will.

Christmas is Christian, and it has been made pagan. Christmas is spiritual, and it has been made material. Christmas is the anniversary of an eternal event; it has been made the orgy of a passing phase.

We have erred in making Christmas always "merry," when really it has its sadness. Christmas has been made exclusively the day of the children, when really it is more the day of the mature. Not only Christmas, but every day, should be "merry" for the children, for they are at the merry time of life. But Christmas is a time for adults also. Indeed, the First Christmas was exclusively a day of adults—the adulthood of the fields and the heavens and the homes of Bethlehem dominating the scene. With the children it is always "this Christmas" or "next Christmas"; with the adults it is always, last Christmas, or many Christmasses ago. That which is anticipation to the young becomes memory to their elders. And if we could weigh the sentiments of the day, tender sadness born of the memory of other Christmasses would press down the scale.

The cartoonists rarely limn a Christmas thought without a tinge of sadness—the bare, garret, the empty stocking, the poor child. Goodfellow clubs, for all their heartiness and zeal, finish their work in a mood of infinite regret. And those whose good will takes the form of dinners to the poor, are conscious how small a dent one dinner makes in the problem of the world.

This sense of futility has no other cause than our materialistic idea of Christmas. We have reduced the season to the sordid level of Things. The modern Christmas card is the price tag. Materially the day is a mockery: spiritually it may become the first day of a New Age.

If Christmas is but a fashion, it may well vanish in its

present form; if it is a Festival, it can remain so only to those who know what it commemorates. There is enough joy in the fact of Christmas itself to infuse all the warmth and light of the merriest Yuletide tale, in any family that dares to live the festival from the heart instead of from the purse. Unless parents can heap the bedsides of their children with mounds of fragile toys, whose tawdry life is brief at best, they feel that something is amiss. Unless friends can exchange presents extravagantly, they feel that somewhere they have failed.

It would be hard to conceive a more disconcerting act than to halt the throngs of "worry Christmas" people and to demand of them—"What is it all about?" They would

not be able to tell. They change the style of their bonnets because Spring appears. They gorge themselves on the last Thursday in November because harvest is gathered. Why do they upset the tenor of their lives, and crimp themselves financially, and undergo keen distress of mind on the 25th of December? Why do they do it? What is the cause of this phenomenon? It is not the New Year. It is not the anniversary of a national event. What is it? How many, thus suddenly challenged, could account for themselves?

The whole gladness of Christmas consists in knowing the true "why" of Christmas. There are some people to whom Christmas does not belong. These are, for the most part, its spoliators. They may spoil it as much as they like for themselves; it never was theirs anyway; but we should not let them lure us to spoil it for ourselves.

Christmas tells us, for one thing, that goodness is always being born into the world, that in the cradles of the world the hope of the world is dawning. Christmas tells us that earth is not a lone planet swinging wide

in a void of law and matter, but is near enough the throne of spirit to catch the music and reflect the light. Christmas tells us that the beginning of joy was a Gift, and that not of ourselves, but from another plane to this. If we know this message of Christmas, we are then free of the slavery of Things.

Joy is free to come from its only source, which is from above us, not below; and Peace comes upon us, which is the mother-spirit of Good Will to Men. And from Good Will come the best gifts of all—those which carry with them the heart of the giver.

### ...This Week...

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An Intimate Little Picture of the  
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#### America Brings New Foods From Many Lands

Reviewing the Important and Interesting  
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#### D'Israeli's Portrait of the Jews

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#### England's Dye Industry: A Burning Question

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#### THE PROBLEM OF ASTHMA—THE ORIGIN OF SPORTS

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